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FROM AA/S FELTMAN TO CDA CONNELLY

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [APER](#) [AMGT](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: THANK YOU AND FAREWELL

Maura,

As you prepare to leave Damascus, I want to take this opportunity to thank you and the entire Mission for the outstanding work you have done - and will continue to do - as the U.S. continues to engage Syria with the goal of advancing peace and ensuring stability.

From coordinating complex, multi-faceted visits to reporting cables that set the standard for analysis, insight, and policy prescription, Embassy Damascus continues to represent the best of NEA and the Department. Under your leadership Embassy Damascus superbly handled a week of visits that included FPOTUS Carter, an eight-member CENTCOM-led delegation, and Special Envoy Mitchell - the most senior Executive Branch official to meet President Asad since January 2005. I would like to specifically acknowledge the Management and RSO teams for their tremendous efforts during these visits. I would also like to offer my personal appreciation for the assistance your Public Diplomacy section provided as we prepared our public messages. This is just another example of how Post has ensured we in Washington recognize the importance of calibrating our statements and messages to the Syrian public and calling attention to the issues which generate press coverage and interest.

As you prepare to depart, I want to note the tremendous work you and the entire Mission have done on two critical issues: advancing the new embassy compound project and addressing lingering issues related to the closure of the Damascus Community School. I know you, the Management section, and others on your team have spent countless hours on these two critical issues. Thank you from all of us in Washington.

Finally, I just want to reiterate the value I personally and policy-makers throughout the interagency place on Post's reporting. Your cables are timely, relevant, and inform most of Washington's policy discussions on Syria. I especially appreciate that you continue to add to the "Re-engaging Syria" series; "The SARG chooses hardball," "what is the U.S. waiting for?" and "Patience, persistence and focus will get us success" were especially well-written and widely read.

You have also used reporting to raise awareness about issues that are slightly off Washington's radar, specifically Post's recent cable on conditions at the al-Tanf refugee camp, drought conditions in Syria and the UN's hope that the U.S. will contribute to their appeal, and possible problems with how democracy programming in Syria correlates with our current policy. You and the entire team at Embassy Damascus have done an outstanding job. We know the quality of this reporting will continue even after you depart.

As much as I value what you have done in Damascus, I am looking forward to welcoming you to the NEA Front Office family. We know Embassy Damascus will continue its great work to promote and advance U.S. interests vis--vis Syria.

Best,

Jeff
CLINTON